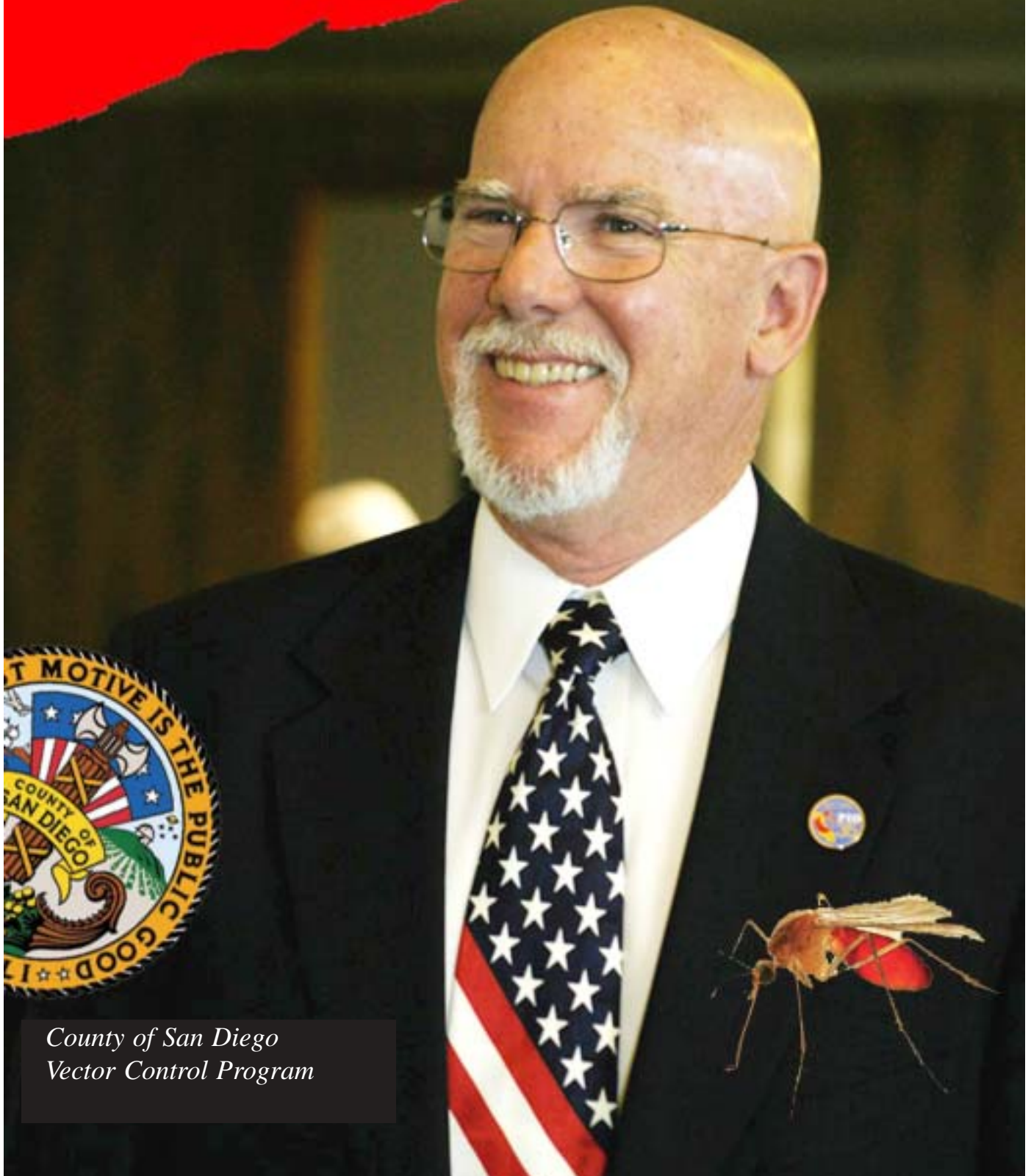


Bill's Fight for Life



*County of San Diego
Vector Control Program*

Bill's Fight for Life



Being a County of San Diego Public Information Officer, Bill Polick knew a lot about West Nile virus (WNV) --- but he never thought he would become part of the West Nile "story." Today he hopes by sharing his story he will help others avoid getting sick. Polick knew about West Nile virus long before most county residents. He was present at the County's 2001 news conference that exposed the threat WNV poses to San Diego residents, two full years before the virus was even confirmed to be in San Diego County.

But, in September 2008, Bill fell victim to the virus. WNV is a potentially life-threatening disease carried by birds. Mosquitoes transmit the virus from infected birds to people and horses. The virus often goes undiagnosed as many people who contract the virus show no symptoms. Others get mild symptoms ranging from headaches to muscle stiffness, rash, fever and nausea. These symptoms are often mistaken for the flu.

In severe cases like Bill's, the illness can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and meningitis (swelling of the tissue surrounding the brain and spinal column). Symptoms include numbness, paralysis, tremors, severe headaches, hallucinations and loss of vision. Encephalitis and meningitis can also affect memory and other cognitive functions. These neurological effects can be permanent. Nearly 1,200 deaths have been reported nationwide since 1999, when the disease was first discovered in the U.S.

hurt. He also began to hallucinate. His next stop was the hospital emergency room where he spent the next 13 hours getting tested for meningitis among other things. As there is no treatment for viral meningitis, his doctors needed to find out if his meningitis was bacterial or viral. It took almost two weeks to get the diagnosis. It was West Nile virus.

By then Bill had lost almost 30 pounds. He has very little memory of his long hospital stay. On a follow up visit to his doctor, Bill found out that his doctors didn't know if he "was going to make it."

Before he got West Nile virus, Bill was an avid, 62-year-old motorcycle rider and surfer. He worked as the spokesperson for the County's Department of Public Works. Once the disease was diagnosed, it was more than three months before he would ride his motorcycle. It was another three months before he had the strength to surf.

Today, almost two years later, he is lucky to have recovered almost fully. He still has a hard time surfing and cannot stay in the cold water as long as he used to.

By being aware of the illness, its symptoms and preventive measures, we can all ensure a healthier San Diego. Watch for updates on the County of San Diego, Department of Environmental Health website:

www.SDFightTheBite.com

You can also text PEST to 75309 to receive community health alerts on your mobile phone. Let's work together to "Fight the Bite."

Accelerating Effects



Bill does not remember being bitten by a mosquito. He does remember "waking up on Monday morning with a rash" from his neck to his feet. He immediately went to see his doctor who sent him to the lab for some blood work to try to determine the cause of the rash. By this point, the virus was attacking Bill's brain. He has "no memory of going to the lab or driving back to work."

By Wednesday, Bill was shivering so much that his jaw

Five Easy Ways to Fight the Bite

1. Apply mosquito repellent before you go outdoors – especially at dawn and dusk
2. Wear long sleeves and long pants outdoors – especially at dawn and dusk
3. Report dead birds (crows, hawks and jays) to the County of San Diego Vector Control Program
4. Check for standing water outside your home once a week
5. Call Vector Control to get free mosquito fish for green pools, ponds and fountains, (858) 694-2888

FIGHT theBite!



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